Tip Sheet to Assist Libraries with
**Minimum Standards for Rhode Island Public Libraries**

Standard 31: The library board adopts a long-range plan which encompasses at least three years and is reviewed annually.

MAIN AIMS OF PLANNING
- **Co-ordination**
- **Communication**
- **Motivation**
- **Control**
- **Evaluation**

Above is a representation of basic components to effective planning. Stephen Brookson lists them as 5 of 6 "main aims of budgeting." As budgeting is a "key management tool for planning," the following can apply to the main aims of planning as well. Co-ordination is "to help co-ordinate the activities of the various parts of the organization and ensure that they are consistent." Communication is "to communicate more easily the objectives, opportunities, and plans" of the library to the various departmental managers. Motivation is "to provide motivation for managers [and staff] to try to achieve the organizational and individual goals." Control is "to help control activities by measuring progress against the original plan, adjusting where necessary." Evaluation is "to provide a framework for evaluating the performance of managers [and staff] in meeting individual and departmental targets."

Credit: Many of the concepts and key words in this tip sheet were derived from the inspirational and well-organized book, Managing Budgets by Stephen Brookson. The book was published by Dorling Kindersley in 2000. Exact words gleaned from the book are in quotes.
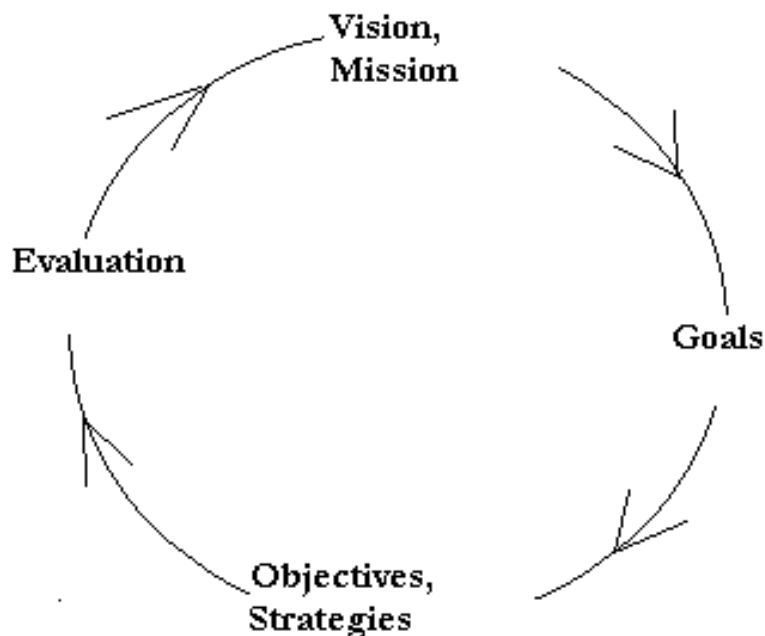
Besides reading the popular <u>New Planning for Results: a streamlined approach</u> by Sandra Nelson, here are a few other thoughts to guide you.

To start the **ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY NEEDS** gather information about "cultural, social," educational, and economical status of those who work and live within the parameters of the defined library service area. These are community identifiers. Once the library service area is defined, add "population" size of the library service area and breakdown of the population by the community identifiers. The community as defined by the parameters of the defined library service area can be internal or external sources. Neighboring residences and businesses are the "external influence" on the library vision and mission statement. Staff, trustees, and library friends are the "internal influences" on the library vision and mission statement.

VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES of the library are based on a review of past performance as well as plans for the future. "The popular SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)" analysis is one of many techniques to use in reviewing the past performance of the library. The review procedure must be "honest" and detached from "fault-finding." Use "lessons from the past as a tool" for the "future." Unashamedly, recognize the library's "weaknesses and threats."

The **VISION** and **MISSION** statements echo the "ambitions" of the library. They relate to perceived functions of the library in terms of the community analysis. The mission statement defines the library. The vision statement announces how the library "plans to grow in terms of quality" and relevance to its community; It is a sweeping yet succinct statement of the ambition. The vision statement evokes the essence of the ambition in a meaningful remembrance.

GOALS are similar to the vision of the library in that they both describe ambitions. Goals further detail and elaborate on the ambitions in the vision statement. Like a camera focused on a garden, goals zoom in on sections of the garden.

OBJECTIVES are like flowers in the garden. They are tangible. You can measure their growth and report on their progress in greater detail. Objectives are a strategic or short-term plan. Objectives should allow reaction to change and be used to "continually reassess validity of plans." To clarify objectives "compare actual results to ideal results" and "close the gap." In other words, use the review process to shape/change objectives. "Objectives" can be "general" or they can "relate specifically to marketing, organizational or financial concerns." Objectives define ambitions in a way they can be measured. Objectives should "balance what is achievable" with what is ambitious. To set realistic "targets" for achievement involve all who should participate in achieving it. Participants should clearly understand their role in meeting objectives. Success with objectives does depend on participant motivation and cooperation. Participants may include staff and boards.

EVALUATION is the "procedural checks and investigations" that let you know "what happened when." Develop and keep "practical checklists" as part of a "planned procedure." Be prepared to take "control action" which is "to prepare management reports, evaluate discrepancies, decide how to remedy discrepancies, and take effective corrective action." Use evaluation to learn what to do differently next time to make sure it does not happen again. "Distinguish between poor planning and poor performance." Depend on and refer to participants involved in shaping objectives to help in the evaluation and monitoring of objectives they have a role in. Expect discrepancies between ideal and "actual performance results" that are measured through the objectives. "Analyze discrepancies" and "make constructive adjustments" to the plan. Assess external and internal influences and resource availability.

Questions to Ask When Developing a Long-Range Plan

What does your community want from the library?
- hours open (which evenings open, Sunday)
- types of materials and services (books on tape vs. CD, homework assistance)
- ways to deliver these services (online reference from home and work, story times on Saturdays, mail to shut-ins)

> Surveys, focus groups, feedback to staff, statistics reflecting use patterns, and demographics are ways of gathering this information.

Do you have the resources, or the ability to shift or expand your resources, to provide the services people want?

> In translating what you want to do into what you can do, consider how to allocate funding, staff, facilities, equipment, etc.

Are your objectives measurable? Do they state targets in terms of:
- who will be impacted
- with what level of service, and
- by which time frame?

> Evaluation then is based on whether you met your targets. Distinguish the output from the outcome/impact (output = we held 10 story times for two year olds, but outcome = 15 toddlers and their caregivers were exposed to quality literature and new vocabulary). It would be possible to survey caregivers about whether the books were new to them and if their children learned new words. From week to week or at the end, some books could be revisited briefly to see if words are remembered. Holding the 10 story times was the strategy that brought about this impact on toddlers between September and December. Another strategy under this objective might be to add a certain number of books to the collection for toddlers, possibly through a grant (even adding multiple copies of the books you share at story time for circulation and reinforcement at home).

> Multiple strategies with outputs can contribute to a desired outcome. Thus, job seekers could find assistance through adding 10 new practice test books in the collection, 3 computers with word processing for developing resumes, and a section of web site links to local joblines.

Does your plan drive your daily activities?
For the example above:
- Coverage can be arranged for preparing and conducting the story time (staffing)
- The children's services librarian can receive training in developmentally appropriate books and activities for toddlers (continuing education)
- Funding can be allocated or sought through a grant for increased books in this area or multiple copies (budgeting)
- Publicity might emphasize what children and their caregivers will gain from attending story time (public relations)
- Registration might be offered by email for the ease of working parents (service delivery)